

# New Bethel Christian Life Commission Report – May 2009

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## Quote of Month

“However many blessings we expect from God,  
His infinite liberality will always exceed all our wishes and our thoughts.”  
John Calvin (1509-1564), Theologian, Protestant Reformer, Geneva, Switzerland

## Texas 2010 – Tyler County Baptist Pastors Invited

FBC Senior Pastor Ross Shelton is leading the effort for Tyler County to place a gospel DVD into every home by Easter 2010. With \$5,000 in the bank already, he wants to include all the Baptist churches in Tyler County. For more info on the next info-planning meeting, please, contact him at Ross@fbcwoodville.com or call him at 409-283-2588. More to come in the months ahead.

## Celebrating 400 Years of Baptist Heritage—1609-2009

*Baptist Standard* 121:1 (1-12,-2009)

The year 2009 is the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Baptist tradition. To help celebrate this big year, the Baptist History and Heritage Society has created a new 24-article series, HISTORY SPEAKS. Readers of these articles are urged to print copies for themselves and even to duplicate copies for distribution and study.

## Complimentary Baptist Heritage Bulletin Inserts

[www.BaptistHistory.org](http://www.BaptistHistory.org)

**Baptist Beginnings, 1609 ~ Baptist Beginnings in America, 1639 ~ Separate Baptists  
Baptist Contributions to Religious Freedom ~ The Move of Baptists Westward**

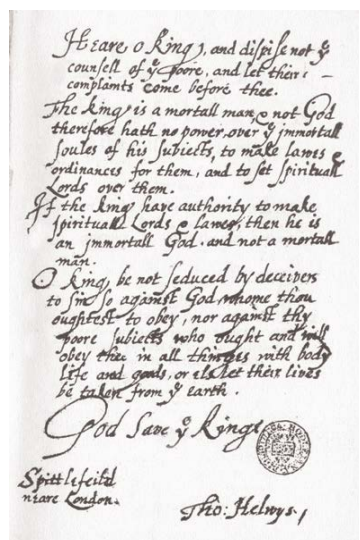
### < Insert > **Baptist Beginnings, 1609**

In 2009, Baptists around the world are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the founding of the first Baptist church. English Christians living in Amsterdam, Holland, began meeting for worship in a bakehouse, and sometime in early 1609, the group held its first baptismal service. While planning that service, the group encountered a serious problem. No one in the group had experienced baptism as a believer. They all had been baptized as infants in the Church of England. The leader of the group, John

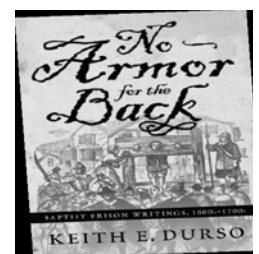
Smyth, suggested that he baptize himself first and then baptize the other believers. Each person baptized was an adult who had confessed belief in Jesus Christ. This small group was committed to the belief that church membership should be based on a personal confession of faith followed by believer's baptism. Their radical decision countered the religious expectations of their homeland of England, where in the seventeenth century, all citizens were required to be members of the Church of England. Refusing to adhere to this requirement meant being subjected to fines, whippings, and imprisonments. A desire for religious freedom and the study of the New Testament led this small band of Christians to reject infant baptism and found a new church. Thus, in 1609, led by Smyth and Thomas Helwys, these religious dissenters became the first Baptists. In 1612, Helwys and about ten other members sailed home to England, settled near London at Spitalfield, and planted the first Baptist church on English soil. Shortly after his arrival in England, Helwys published *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, the first document written in English that called for complete religious freedom. Helwys asserted that the king of England had no power to control religious beliefs or practices, but instead each person, regardless of his or her religious beliefs, must have complete spiritual freedom. Helwys also challenged the king to allow individuals the right to read and interpret scripture. Failing to allow such freedom, Helwys noted, would result in the people being kept in “woeful spiritual bondage.” For the past four hundred years, Baptists at their best have continued to affirm and defend the freedoms embraced by our earliest Baptist leaders.



John Smyth



Flyleaf of Thomas Helwys's, *Mystery of Iniquity*



**No Armor for the Back:  
Baptist Prison Writings,  
1600s-1700s  
bv Keith E. Durso**

## Baptist Contributions to Religious Freedom

Portion of Complimentary Baptist Heritage Bulletin Insert from [www.BaptistHistory.org](http://www.BaptistHistory.org)

In 1776, John Leland led Virginia Baptists in supporting Thomas Jefferson's effort to revoke assessment taxes to support religion. After that effort was defeated, Jefferson responded in 1779 with his "Act for Establishing Religious Freedom." Led by Leland, Baptists were the primary early supporters of this act, which became law in 1786. In 1787, when Virginia Baptists learned that the United States Constitution as submitted to the states did not guarantee religious freedom and church-state separation, they mounted protests. Through the now well-connected Leland, they successfully pressured lawmakers to include freedoms of liberty, speech, and press in the Constitution. Finally, in 1791, the long-cherished Baptist vision of a nation founded upon religious liberty and separation of church and state was realized.



John Leland

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## John Calvin's 500th Birthday Reformed Church Celebrates Worldwide

John Calvin was a theologian, pastor, biblical exegete, and tireless apologist for Reformed Christianity, and ranks among the most important thinkers in church history. His theological work helped establish the Reformation as a legitimate and thriving religious movement throughout Europe. Logos Bible Software offers seven new collections by and about the Calvin in honor of his 500th birthday.

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is a research center specializing in John Calvin and Calvinism that opened in 1981 and is located at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. The goal for the book collection is to acquire everything written by and about John Calvin in all extant editions. In addition, works by and about reformers close to Calvin, such as Bucer and Beza, are selectively collected.

[www.Calvin500.com](http://www.Calvin500.com) ~ [www.Calvin.edu](http://www.Calvin.edu) ~

[www.CalvinSeminary.edu](http://www.CalvinSeminary.edu) ~ [www.Calvin09.org](http://www.Calvin09.org) ~ [www.Calvin.jp](http://www.Calvin.jp)

A host of conferences are being around the world, especially in Geneva, but also in the Orlando, Florida; Decatur, Georgia; Taylors, South Carolina; Princeton, New Jersey; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Toronto and Montreal, Canada; Mainz, Germany, Tokyo, Japan; Edinburgh, England; Stellenbosch, South Africa; Belfast, Northern Ireland; St. Petersburg, Russia; Amsterdam; and The Netherlands.



John Calvin  
Geneva, Switzerland



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## GodTube.com – Christian Answer to YouTube?

Edited by Michael G. Maness from Lisa Miller, "BeliefWatch GodTube" *Newsweek* (Mar. 26, 2007)

What would Jesus download? Brainchild of Chris Wyatt, a Dallas Theological Seminary student and former television producer, he followed his mother's advice and got "to know the Lord." New sites mimic their progenitors for a specific audience. On GodTube, there's a clip from Evangelist Ray Comfort demonstrating the perfection of God's creation with an actual banana: "It's hard—OK, impossible—" says Miller, "not to see it as an (unintentional?) dirty joke." Another clip takes the hip-hop hit "Baby Got Back" and turns up the volume with "Baby Got Bible" with hilarious lyrics like "Bless me, bless me and teach me about John Wesley." GodTube was getting 50-60,000 unique users a day in 2007.

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## Pakistan Is Rapidly Adding Nuclear Arms, U.S. Says

New York Times, May 17, 2009 By THOM SHANKER and DAVID E. SANGER

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress have been told in confidential briefings that Pakistan is rapidly adding to its nuclear arsenal even while racked by insurgency, raising questions on Capitol Hill about whether billions of dollars in proposed military aid might be diverted to Pakistan's nuclear program. Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed the assessment.

rest of article > [www.NYTimes.com/2009/05/18/world/asia/18nuke.html?\\_r=1&th&emc=th](http://www.NYTimes.com/2009/05/18/world/asia/18nuke.html?_r=1&th&emc=th)

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**BGCT Texas Christian Life Commission**, [www.christianlifecommission.org](http://www.christianlifecommission.org) & [www.bgct.org](http://www.bgct.org), 888-332-5870 — **Baptist Joint Committee**, Washington, DC — [www.bjcpa.org](http://www.bjcpa.org) — **SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission**, [www.erc.com](http://www.erc.com) — **Jim McReynolds**, Representative, Texas House District 12 — Capitol: 512-463-0490; District: 936-634-9786  
**Texas Legislature** [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us) - Who represents you: [www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm)

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[www.Senate.gov](http://www.Senate.gov)  
[www.House.gov](http://www.House.gov)